



Digital Proofer

See, the Ship in the...

Authored by Barry Blumenfeld

6.0" x 9.0" (15.24 x 22.86 cm)
Black & White on White paper
120 pages

ISBN-13: 9781484809426
ISBN-10: 1484809424

Please carefully review your Digital Proof download for formatting, grammar, and design issues that may need to be corrected.

We recommend that you review your book three times, with each time focusing on a different aspect.

- 1 Check the format, including headers, footers, page numbers, spacing, table of contents, and index.
- 2 Review any images or graphics and captions if applicable.
- 3 Read the book for grammatical errors and typos.

Once you are satisfied with your review, you can approve your proof and move forward to the next step in the publishing process.

To print this proof we recommend that you scale the PDF to fit the size of your printer paper.

*See, the Ship in the Bay
is Riding*

poems by

Barry Blumenfeld

SECOND EDITION

Audrey Press

Copyright 2013 Barry Brent

ISBN-13: 978-1484809426 (Audrey Press)

ISBN-10: 1484809424

Again, for Audrey

Acknowledgements

Thank you Julie Cox, Mike Finley, Scott Kamlar, Randy Kapelke, Rick Kempa, Char Miller, and Ken Sparling--friends, advisors, and encouragers. And as always, thank you Audrey, for your love.

"Praise" is a stanza of "American Nights": *Exquisite Corpse -- A Journal of Letters and Life*.

"Woman with a Mango": *Cimarron Review* and, in a different form: *The William and Mary Review*.

"Ode to Prince", "Haircut": *Milk Magazine*.

"Speedway", "The Dual", "The Vision After the Sermon", "Breasts with Red Flowers Nos. 1-4", "Gesso", "Seaman", "Radio", "The Mask", "The Ibis", "My War with the Robins", "Caruso Sings *Santa Lucia*", "Group-therapist Contemplates Winter Crows", "Group-therapist Contemplates Dead Songbirds", "Group-therapist Listens to Water Music", "Group-therapist Dreams of Wolves": *Poor Mojo's Almanac(k)*.

"Bus Stop": *The Vagabond Monthly*.

"I Put My Ear To Yours", "Analyze This", "Bad Moments", "The Man Who Smelled Himself", "In the Elevator at Bamberger's", "She Hurt My Feelings", "The Elevator Operator Speaks", "Dear Diary": *Stick Your Neck Out*.

"Boy with Honeybee Hair", "Purgatorius", "A Cricket and an Owl": *LIEF*.

Contents

11	"See, the Ship in the Bay is Riding"
12	Praise
13	Bus Stop
15	The Mouse in the House
19	The Crisis in American Education
28	Speedway
30	Haircut
35	Bad Moments
36	Group-therapist Contemplates Winter Crows
40	Group-therapist Contemplates Dead Songbirds
42	Group-therapist Listens to Water Music
44	Group-therapist Dreams of Wolves
46	The Man Who Smelled Himself
50	Analyze This
52	I Put My Ear To Yours
55	The Dual
57	Ode to Prince
59	Caruso Sings <i>Santa Lucia</i>
62	My War with the Robins
64	Who Is He Killing Now?
68	Boy with Honeybee Hair
70	Purgatorius
73	A Cricket and an Owl
75	Cubicle

77	Mooning
	<i>Olive</i>
79	Dear Diary
81	The Poet
83	Bluto's Lament
	<i>Eye, Gauguin</i>
85	Breasts with Red Flowers No. 1
87	Breasts with Red Flowers No. 2
89	Breasts with Red Flowers No. 3
91	Breasts with Red Flowers No. 4
93	The Vision After the Sermon
96	Woman with a Mango
	<i>Elevator</i>
99	In the Elevator at Bamberger's
101	She Hurt My Feelings
103	The Elevator Operator Speaks
	<i>Mommy</i>
107	Gesso
109	Seaman
110	Radio
113	The Mask
116	The Ibis

See, the Ship in the Bay
is Riding

"See, the Ship in the Bay is Riding"

Here; here is the man; here:
 Slumped in the deck chair, knee
 Over knee; conning a book.
 A scarf of cork cowl his
 Chin; his eyebrows lift a
 Little; his dipping lashes
 Screen off our gaze. Briny
 Locks droop towards his brow and
 Make a point by his ear.
 A man who's reading hasn't
 Seen Elysium. Our
 Thoughts bend towards the page, which
 The fingers of his left
 Hand protectively grasp.
 Our thoughts--where are they? Where
 Do they go when the tide
 Goes out--when we go with
 It towards the sea?

Praise

The hair that crowns you, spun metals, the hair
 beneath your arms like hay...
Woolly brown, the hair like a hand
That licks one finger from cunt to asshole
And lackadaisically caresses the summits of your
 thighs...
Tracks come and go around your eyes...
The skin of your face, now flush, now sallow...
Pouched incipient jowls, the skin around your
 mouth...
Concave hypnotic cheeks...
Deep lips pulled back from the teeth...
Your child scored the skin around your hips...
Freckles on your soft back skin...
Gold, the skin that tents your ribs...
Drawn, the skin along your breasts...
And your nipples, too, are huge and drawn
 and golden....

Bus Stop

The Great Salt Lake is on the march.
Its mirror tip spills north across the unresisting flats,
Low to the ground, sinking piers,
Drowning resort hotels.
Daytimes the hydrofoils cavort in spirals, sun-mad,
Just as no-mind shimmer-winged darning needles
Used to do off the beach in Brooklyn.
The Rockaways.

Anyway: some gypsies are living in Ogden.
All the bus routes in the U.S.A.
Tie a knot there.
Some who pass through never arrive
At their intended destinations.
This is no slander on gypsies,
You understand---
I'm Hungarian myself---
But the tongue they speak
Is a beaded curtain
Between those wanderers
And the rest of us.

I spied a man through it.
His daughter's hand
Was just too soft to drop.
Outside the plate glass,
A bare street stared
Into the store front, also bare,
Where she and I were standing.
I was more nearly exhausted then than I am today.
It was simply impossible
To have faith in those mountains.
They were too pale,
Their silences too arrogant.

Her father was against me,
Yet she offered to tell my fortune,
No charge.

Maybe you come back.

But I had a bus to catch.
A Greyhound.
Bounding toward my future.

The Mouse in the House

This was in nineteen
seventy-nine. I
was going to flunk
out of grad school for
the third time. I had
a math prof for a
roomie, no better
off than I was. His
wife was gone. He said
ignore the strange sounds
I make in the night.
He rented me a
room in his house, a
few blocks from here. I
haven't come far in
all these years.

My roomie was the
kind of guy who asks
a girl if he might
kiss her, before he
kisses her. I know,

because I married
one of those girls. My
roomie was in the
foyer when he asked
her for one; she let
him have it, too. I
wasn't jealous. I
didn't know her; I
didn't even meet
her for another
three years. Meanwhile, I

was the kind of guy
who's thirty and dates
a seventeen year
old virgin. Working
and working on that
hymen, one flight up
from the foyer. I

worked on my math at
a table in the
kitchen. There was a
mouse in the house. I

set a trap where I
could see it from the
table--formica,
with rusty siding.
Every day, the mouse
emerged from its hole
and came nearer to
the trap. It looked at
me, and I looked back.
Its eyes were shiny.
I don't know what my
eyes looked like. It didn't
trust me, but every
day it crept closer,
sniffing at the cheese
on the trigger. I

had no issues with
that mouse. It was the
mouse's house, not mine,
the way I saw things.
I knew I'd regret
what I was doing,
but, still, I did it.

Green clouds climbed like stuffed
couches sideways in
the summer sky. It
was Day Ninety-nine,
or whatever, of
America Held
Hostage. My roomie,
sad fellow, did his
best, but the wife in
my future was not
in his. Later, in

in the dark of night, my
roomie made strange sounds.
I ignored them. I was
listening to the
mouse.

The Crisis in American Education

"What would life be without arithmetic, but a scene of
horrors?"

-Rev. Sydney Smith, letter to young
lady, 22 July 1835

I have to piss, but
I'm going to hold
it in until I
finish this. Nineteen
eighty-one, city of
Minneapolis,
decked out for
an inquisition
at Washburn High School.
I'm just some guy with
a math diploma
and no work. What I
know about teaching,
plus a buck or two,
might buy a cup of
joe. The principal
points his chin at some

kids outside and says,
"Animals." Black kids,
of course. I'm a big
Democrat and all
like that, but I keep
mum, and I get the
gig. Day one, a kid
in home room starts a
fight over marbles.
I thought marbles went
out with Roosevelt.
The kid is wider
than he is tall. He
can take me, and the
other kids know it.
They wait. I give us
both a break---I
swing the door wide and
say, "Out!" He won't go
unless I shake his
hand first. So, I do.
I happened to have
it bad for a girl
with red hair at the

time. Her brother was
a friend of mine, a
philosopher with
no diplomas. He
worked in the grain mills
and read Heidegger.
I rented rooms in
his house. His sister
wouldn't have me, so
I spent time with his
ex--a flirtatious
sort. I was thinking
about self-murder.
I didn't know how much
time I had left. My
philosopher friend's
ex asked me, over
a game of Boggle,
when we were going
to have our affair.
Then she simply asked
me over. So, I
went over there, but
it was a con, or

a sickness of some
kind, or maybe it
was a game. I walked
home in the middle of
the night, tripped on some
Minneapolis ice,
broke my fall with my
face, and thought, *This is
it. The bottom.* But
there is no bottom.
All there is, when you're
in that state, is a
hole to the end of
forever, through which
you keep falling and
falling and falling.
Despair is boring
that way. Next day was
Monday. In lieu of
something better to
do, I went to school,
where a kid had a
knife up to a girl's
eye in my classroom.

It took me an hour
to talk him down. When
he finally gave up
the blade, I marched him
down to some office,
marched back up feeling
heroic, and found him
waiting for me. He
screamed, *I'm bigger
than you are.* He was
absolutely right,
but the afflatus
was upon me and
I knocked him into
a locker and screamed
back, *Walk away!* As
Chandler says somewhere:
*My bluff was thinner
than a weekend
wedding ring.* We both
knew this, he and I,
and we both pretended
that he bought it. A
girl--a woman--

decided I should
be her man. Each day,
she insisted on
sitting by my side.
Eighteen, she was, with
two daughters, and her
name was Audrey. She
wrote mash notes to me:
places, times--pencilled in
the lines of her math
assignments. I said
something was missing
from the room or the
desk (something always
was) and made her dump
out her purse in front
of me and God and
everybody. She
didn't sit next to me
after that. I felt
like shit. By Christmas,
my eyes are scalded
maps of sleepless hell.
Everybody in

the building is sure
I drink. It's true that
I'm drunk all the time--
on adrenalin, on
rage, on bile, and on
pity, too--pity
for my innocent,
delirious
constituents, for
dead sparrows in the
snowbanks and cats
under cars at night,
and, below all, for
myself, my self, my
sick and stupid self.
Some old hand asks me
to *Please come back in*
January. I'm
a quitter. She knows
this, and so do I.
I do come back, for
some reason, and, in
the break room, I tell
them how some guy put

a knife on my throat
at two a.m. one
night, after a dance,
to relieve me of
eighty dollars and
a few other things--
any joy I might
have had upon my
person, illusions,
you know, that sort of
thing---made me lay in
the snow and the shit
while he made sure he
had all of it. That's
how I spent Christmas
vacation, you see.
On my hands and my
knees. What my colleagues
want to know is, was
I drunk? What I want
to know is, what's so
fucking funny? My
friend's ex was, in fact,
a drunk. She drove a

school bus and she had
pretty titties, which
she liked to show to
the schoolboys in the
windows by sunning
herself on the school
bus roof. Why, I can't
say, but I can say
how I took leave of
my charges: last day of
school, nothing to do,
so we play Pretend.
We walk a dog, and
I am the dog, of course,
and darn if those kids
don't find a collar
and a leash somewhere,
real ones. I can't say
how. I am in the
hall, for all to see.
I am on my knees.
A dog is barking.

Speedway

you
on a porch
a street called Speedway
you
on a hill
a beard of wheat
and the sky
arches invisible
its dome
blackbirds flecking it
a *kaw kaw kaw* -ing
you
listening
hearing something
the curve of the horizon
was subtle
but you
watching
saw it bend away
for miles
and for miles
you could see clear across Iowa

you
were watching the stallions
go under it
far and silent
their manes streaming
their sweaty coats
that shined
a long
time
ago

Haircut

Lush Tucson! Black widows

Colonizing my back porch,
Great green un-nameable

Wings of some thing flutter-
Ing on the porch screen--the

Spooks keep a-coming.
Like this flying bug,

Slammed me in the back
Right on the spine one

Day, shooting waves of
Cancer-kundalini

Up to my third eye: a
Stupendous roach. I was

A Bronx boy; cockroaches
Are my cousins. Midnights

On Mosholu Parkway,
I flicked the light-switch,

They froze, then scrambled by the
Dozen. Swallowed them in

Chocolate milk, bit them
In two and spat them out

Between my teeth. Bronx roaches.
But this Speedway beast could

Eat a baby's arm. In my
Kitchen, squatting, staring,

Waving those antennas, it
Made the whole world sick.

So: bugacide with a broom
And a can of Raid. Drenched

Behind the toilet bowl,
After that chase, it looked

Noble. I cleaned up and
Cut my hair. I hacked it

With scissors, I hacked it
With spoons. I chopped it with

Teacups, assassins, and looms.
Then trouble: wife came home.

My queer shoulder hit the door:
She sees me, I see double!

"Getting a haircut," sez I,
And sneaks out the back,

And don't answer when she
Calls, "It's Sunday!"

But it *was* Sunday. I
Found a barber, at last,

In Tucson's light-washed
Ghetto. Who said, "One thing

I can do." Sage persons
From the neighborhood

Hushed while this surgeon
Shaved my head.

I cackled all the way home.
Wife laughed too. Had to --

She rubadubbed my conk and
I rubbed it and we took

Some pix, and so on, and
So on. That night ash

From the summer fires
And dust from the desert

Drove us out by car to the east,

Where the Santa Catalinas

Blazed sideways in the dark.

Best not to speak of fear
And shame: we were nearly

Lovers.

Bad Moments

a couple of bad moments with you
I keep remembering--once, I'm
over you in the bed, looking
at you with cool, not cold, eyes--
I can feel the coolness in them,
how it hits you like some kind
of science fiction ice ray and we
both know I'm thinking about
leaving you and you cry out
don't look at me that way. my
transparency amazes me. by
way of symmetry, as those in
my trade say, in another climate,
it's your turn, and your things are
packed and we're standing in the
parlor for still one more last time,
and you wince with an irrepressible
smile--your delight to be escaping--
you're very polite about it, but
there it is--oh, that was bad.

Group-therapist Contemplates Winter Crows

1.

After long journeys
I came to a yellow room.

Cream-colored, actually,
but the sun was on the walls.

And a shadow too,
a vague silhouette

of slatted blinds and
a man in a fedora

hat.

Head and torso and
hat, in a raked, rapacious

perspective. Nose
like Dick Tracy's,

like the Silver Streak, like
chrysanthemum petals

dipped in snow. What
was he looking at?

2.

*Sunset,
the crows
come back,
black fruit
to the
tree--*

*their quills
the green of*

*garbage bags,
or oil on a*

*puddle, or mice
under punched-*

out eyes--

*next to invisible except
under hard inspection.*

*Nothing to see from here
except their shadows*

*on the sky, but that
is enough to inveigle*

*attention sometimes. The
clients drone. Crows convene*

*Like this only in winter. It
is the season of no*

*mating and pickings
next to nothing: bones*

*from McBurger's; jelly
from a squirrel that*

didn't look both ways.

Hungry happy chilly little

*neighbors, those crows. One
regards the next, and the next*

*the next, and so on, to
oblivion.*

Group-therapist Contemplates Dead Songbirds

Yellow-rumped warblers don't warble,
Apparently, on their peregrinations.
Dead ones, anyway. Or the
Kamikaze versions that play chicken
Over, over and over, with my windshield
Out on Highway 61. Stoic, those birds,
Like passengers on a bus I rode once
From Minneapolis to Coeur d'Alene. Sea-gulls
(Only God knows where they came from)
Manifested in the blue and took
Turns diving at the driver while we sped
Across the badlands, swooping at his
Rippled wheel, vaulting, claws last,
Over the roof, until one missed. Frac-
Tures hooped a starburst, sprays of
Fat, behind the rear-view mirror. *Oh!*
I howled, and was embarrassed. For me,
The silence of those others still echoes
Like cries from the dead.

When yellow-rumped warblers lose
The game, they go off so peaceably--

A bump, a bounce, no muss--it's possible,
I suppose, that the little souls only knocked
The glass to say hello. I slept through un-
Easy dreams and whatever gale it was
Killed the one my wife stroked on the shore
Rocks at Little Marais, over, over and
Over, without speaking, with a twig, sooth-
ing something. Feathers in a mess, or
Something else. No fuss.

Group-therapist Listens to Water Music

Knew a guy once, couldn't handle
Handel. So said he. Too *musical*, too
Pretty. His deal was jazz, something I
Don't like much. So many of my clients
Walk that chaos line--fingers popping,
Soles and heels stomping bloodstains on the
Sidewalk, beating raps or wives or time and
Dancing on their mommies' graves. It's
Contemptible, but I can't say that.

So I hike out to these lava cliffs and
Sit lotus for relief. Babelicious. *Kpsssshhhh*,
The waters scat, *kpsssshhhh*, like cymbals,
Caressed by wire brushes, shuddering
To a morphine sleep. *Kpsssshhhh*. Oh, mama.

But it isn't so easeful for me. Superior
Is too enigmatic. My brain's in-
Fected, don't you see, with manic, Satanic
Ideologies. Sparkle of star-
Light, glitter of sun, send me seeking
For the One. Cut. You take my point, no

Doubt. I don't know what is worst, most tiring:
My questions, beating so useless and
Musical, against the rocks of mere be-
Ing; my thirst, for you, my darling; or
Something else, something I might name
If I had time. But I'm out of it.

Group-therapist Dreams of Wolves

Things dreamed and remembered
Remain above the water line a
Short time only, and sink, as soon
As they are able. The one I love longs
For the song of the loons of Little
Marais. A tissue of lies splits slowly,
Fiber by individual fiber, raped
By an obscene, inquisitive tongue,
Glistening in its splendiferous caul
Of spit, turning its tip this way
And that like the claymation
Probiscus of Rodan. Or Magog
Or McGoo; whatever; firebird hatchlings
Of atomic shit. Old college cafeteria
Trick. The egg lay on the seafloor,
Rocking, tipped this way and that
By interlocking currents that
Haunted me for a thousand gen-
Erations. Well, for a long time,
Anyway. At least a week or
Two. Then birdbeak tapped semaphore
On the inwardness of it, like

This: *dah dit-dit dah, dit-dit dah-dit-dit dah...*
lambs. Let's say so, anyway. Pros-
Ody ain't my beat. The music's
In me, that's all I no. Why I love
My wife is, when she cries
Out in the dark and tosses me those
Hot potato dreams, I forget them
For her. Wolves in the focs'l,
Baying at the, well, you know, where
The moon's fair face swims politely
Under a wooden pail, waiting for a smash
(Everything and everyone is waiting like
That), adrift on the breast of Gitcheegoo-
Mee and puzzled by the stars.

The Man Who Smelled Himself

Once a man smelled himself. Walking
Down the street, he was, busy
With no-one's beeswax but his
Own. *Hmm*, he thought. *What's that?* The
Sidewalks flowed, airless, with
Other people, odorless and
Clean. Leaves fluttered, even though
There was no breeze. (How could there
Be one, after all, given the
Atmospherics?)

It was a very unpleasant
Smell. Our man didn't like it
Very much. It didn't
Reflect well on him, or so
He was afraid. Although
Reflect was the wrong word,
Perhaps. Light and its paths,
Faculties of sight or insight
Seemed a little, well,
Inapposite. What he feared,
Our man, was to *stink*. Only

That.

Let's see, he thought. *Or, er, sniff.*
What is this I'm smelling like?
But he couldn't tell. It was
Bad, though. Repellent, even.
Redolent of death. *That's it*,
He thought. *It's something putrid.*
Our man had small experience
Of rotting things. That's why
He was so slow to grasp this
Particular nettle.

Well, where's it coming from? he
Wondered. Sorely tempted, he
Was, to jab his long nose at
His armpit, to cup his
Fingers in front of his teeth,
Even to tuck one down in the
Fold of his behind and retrieve
It, discreetly, for a whiff.
His eyes narrowed and darted
At the indifferent crowd, as
If they could hear his thoughts, as

He passed this one through the gate
Of consciousness. They couldn't,
Though. They could only smell him.
So, anyway, was he afraid.

"Excuse me, madame!" said our
Man, stepping in the way of
A woman in a dark rich
Dress. "Excuse me. But do you,
By chance, smell something? *I* do."
"Excuse *me*," the woman said,
And stepped right through him. Our
Man was far from satisfied
With this response. He didn't know
Which one of him or her or
It was the least substantial.

Next he tried a banker, or
Someone like that, a white-haired
Bowlered sort with a fat
Paunch and fobbed watch and so on,
Who, when our man repeated
His question, simply *looked* through
Him. A little of his

Dignity was left, thereby,
Intact.

"Do you *smell* me?" he asked the
Next person he met, having
Grown more desperate, hence more
Direct. A professorial
Person, who ignored him more
Pointedly, by throwing
Into the gut of our man
An elbow of the aforesaid
Shape. Then, "Do *you* smell me?" he
Asked a girl who was thinking
About a brassiere on a
Mannequin in the window
They were standing in front of.
Mistake. When *she* ignored him,
He disappeared.

Analyze This

On his deathbed, the counterpane
Folded neat on top of his chin,
A forelock glued by sweat to his
Head, my friend locked pleading eyes on
Mine and tossed his frame below the
Sheets, frantic, it seemed, to escape
The inescapable. *You're the
Greatest friend I ever had*, I
Said, but I don't know if this is
What I meant. The words, the looks
And motions, were loaded with an
Unaccountable weight. We all--
He, I and whatever part of
Me was dreaming this--were faking
It. My own eyes, looking back from
The mirror, expressionless and
Sinister and screaming any-
Way, bear signs from another world.
There is some other world, I'd
Almost swear it, when his eyes or
Yours (you, who may or may not love
Me) roll like a doll's on its

Spindles to look away from this
One.

I Put My Ear To Yours

...let me
try again.
Everything in this
world has interrupted me....
Gas in my bowels. An ache,
stubborn in the core of my bones.
A flame crawling up the nerves in my
arm like the traveling spark from a match to
a tube of dynamite in an execrable movie. A
minatory
pause in the rhythm of my heart, during which I feel it
swell
with my blood; the which, in turn, pools dangerously
there before
flooding out again. A thin monotonous wailing in my
ears--
screams, I think, but who or what is screaming? Can
you hear that? Sssh.... I'll put my ear to
yours; listen. What do
you hear?

Dreary

weather of my
body....

A
man
like me
has little
right to walk
the surface of
earth. Yet suicide
isn't possible--it's too
decisive. I almost never do
what I can't undo. Decision makes
me sick. I waited such a long time to
fuck, for instance, because it's something
you can't take back. Once a fuck, always a

fuck.

...When I think,
voluptuously, of doing what
it has not been possible to do, one imago
beckons....

Ahh....

Hmmm....

I must pee....

The Dual

In the last scene of the Samurai Trilogy
Musashi Mayamoto tiptoes from the sea at dawn.
The surf and sand flirt between his heels
As Sasake his rival comes striding,
Gowned in silks as white as a bride's joy.
His gods, sun and shogun, both see it.
But someone -- an artist --
Has bled all over Musashi's soul.
Someone takes Musashi's one and only soul
For a playground,
Pushing toy values back and forth
While he sweats it out through each and every pore.
Was sadness ever more noble
Than Mifune's face in the moment his sword rises?
The sun's behind him.
Sasake is all too happy to see him come,
Happy and doomed,
Just because he's not conflicted,
Just like a girl his peacefulness recalls.
Sasake has to go,
Just as the dew goes
When the sun of consciousness rises.

So, he nicks Musashi
And with that pretty smile
Falls to earth someone's blood has stippled.

Ode to Prince

Sleep doesn't come---
You, your white guitar as answer to the ulu knife
The round rock woman with bone tear eyes
I see before me wears, haunt me,
Your mascara'd lights
Burning a prayer it will take my life
To intuit on my tongue.
Bums burning on the sidewalks of Saint Paul
Forget what they need to
To recall the Inuit face I saw one tracing
In the dust today,
Over and over circling his thumb to make her stare,
The same one, looking straight up for comfort
Into a gaze as crazy as its own.

Yours is simpler to bear.
Sex and violins tune your ivory axe
To a pitch of indecision, sweet rex,
And I lie here listening to the wind blow black doves
Off their perches as it freshens.
If it's alive, it's helpless
In a storm like yours. You raven,

You embryo assassin,
I crave your silver memories, endless
Songs of your white guitar
Ululating endlessly, no end
To the storm's mandala.

Daggers, daggers---
You've pitted a truth against an untruth.
Something silent sings along with you,
A phantom in the band.
It idly drills a line of little pits
In the Inoucdjouac woman's stone skin
While stray amperes convulse you,
Insouciant, sitting lotus,
Leaning on a drum.
I'll take every little thing I need from you.
Ecstasies of unrequited love,
Hexes, sarcastic harmonies,
Tanks of your syrupy rage.
My advice: remember your materials.
Stone. Ivory. Bone.
Burn your father's manuscripts.

Caruso Sings Santa Lucia

It's a 20th Century universe, Pops,
In which knowing and not knowing
Are just the sides of a coin --
A lead nickel, a 1933 Farouk
Gold dollar, or a piece of
Gethsemane silver, can't say.
All I know is you can't be, say,
A Jew in this town without
You be, also, on the closest of terms
With the closest questions of
Jesusology, like it or not,
Know it or not. And, likewise,
Each and every rocker, rapper,
Jazzbo hipster, Tin Pan
Maniac and polka monster,
Every single soft-shoe master,
And, without exception, each hiphop dancer
From here to Duluth and there to
Mineola is a maestro of listening
When it comes to European
Opera -- a knowledge in the passive
Voice, unspeakable. If you had ears

In the nineteen hundreds, it crept
Into them while you weren't paying attention.
There is a sense, for example,
In which the tides of feeling in an
Aria by Caruso are like unto the waves
That break on the sandy fringes of our
Island, surrendering their being
To the spirit of the air in a crisis of
Whitecaps, and we hear the whitecaps,
The dolorous whitecaps, as his
Voice breaks. This is a move none
Of us fails to grasp, any more
Than the meaning of the pairing
Of a shrug with two raised palms
Eludes us. All of that has been true
For centuries, but, now, after those nineteens,
We know more, we know the manifold
Gesture-language of machines, how
They speak and we speak through them.

No metaphor; microphones. His heartbreak
Survives translation by wire, fabric, static.
It is as though the silk of the speaker cone
Were a mask, for propriety's sake,

Over the face of one who sings, but
Who is dead.

My War with the Robins

Many things ravished me
Before robins ever did.
Dew. Crickets. The hallelujah
Of chlorophyll and flowers
Devoured in a last sharp gasp
Of the gloaming. Grass, of course.
I loved hiding in it, pouncing
On a hapless sprite--a hoppy bug,
A bird (lunch, my own
Green stand for salad...)
Or one of the magical kind.
In the supernatural case, palaver
Ensued. Oberon, Titania, Robin
Goodfellow all knew me for kin
By the shining in my eyes. That's
How I made my fortune--nine
Lives, seven-league boots, life
In the human world. One
By one, I won them from
Elves and fairies I harried
On the lawn. Fierce, feared,
Feral me--ogre of the back yard.

Sparrow fluffing in the dirt,
Bluejay on the bird bath,
Preening cardinal--none was safe.
I lounged and stretched, happy
On the warm earth. Oberon,
Hearing the birds' complaint,
Dispatched his messenger--this
Errand-boy, this passenger-pigeon,
This Puck--his charm is laughter,
A trick above my grasp. Fine
Jest, must be, to sic namesakes
On me--like harpies, squalling
Cheeps and pecks if I venture
Into my lost garden. Just because
I turned one chick, one robin, one
Simulacrum of a moulting dandelion,
To a ruin of feathers under the rose
Bush. It was an ecstatic morsel,
And what is life without some
Pleasure? I must eat. A cat
Cannot be kind.

Who Is He Killing Now?

He was as fat as an elephant's ass,
and he perched on a low stone wall,
his feet dangling in the shadow
of the belly in his undershirt
while he slowly drained a can of suds—
a toy in his blunt hands.
The feet, though: they were tiny.
They motored fecklessly down there,
sapping the rest of him
of motion.

I watched him from the window
of our walk-up on K Street.
Nothing obvious was going on
behind his eyes. Once
in a while, he'd look up,
craning his neck, piercing mine.
His cheeks were so wide
that his putative features
got lost in them—lips reduced
to a curlicue, those bland blue
eyes mere dots in a cartoon.

They (cheeks) were wet and
shiny. I thought, *Does*
he see me? What is he
thinking? Is he? Thinking,
I mean.

Then I caught him staring at me
from a poster in a candy
store on Broadway—no name, just
the sketch of some guy who killed a
kid in the L Street bath-house
after raping him two ways.

I thought, *Wow!*
The wall guy!
Then I thought,
No way. Then I
thought, *Well maybe*
it is, but, if it is,
someone else will
turn him in. I
thought, *What if*
I turn him in and
it isn't him? That

*won't be fun. That
won't be any fun
at all.*

So I let it go, and no-
one else volunteered
either. He just kept
whiling away the afternoons
with his beer cans and his
enormous cheeks and his
fluttering little butterfly
feet clicking against the
gray stones. Once in a
while, when I was
walking home from
the bus stop, I might stop
some kid from bopping
a littler one, or
face down a runt
with a gigantic
transparent green
hand-pumped water gun
and an attitude. Then
I'd wonder about it.

I'd wonder this.

Who is he killing now?

Boy with Honeybee Hair

Appeared walking in my
Sleep along a path through
Some woods, trailed by pilgrims;

Wonder seekers. He perched
In a crotch of a tree
And said *I am a god*,

A god am I. As he
Sang the honeyed verses,
His hair became a halo

Of bees, a buzzing bronze
Cloud of wingéd thoughts and
The thousand eyes they have

For their dark journeying.
Woods are dark, they need things
Like that. *I am a god*,

A god am I, he sang,

And the bees shimmered, and

His forehead came apart
Like a pair of wings, and
Nothing was revealed but

Air, and more bees. That's what
Death is: nothing. *I came*
To tell you, he buzzed. He

Was bare from his shoulders
To his waist, and below
His waist, I don't know, legs

Of an ass, or a goat,
Perhaps. *I came to say*,
He said, *it's nothing to*

Be afraid of, death. It's
A place you go to rest.

Purgatorius

"First Human Ancestor Looked Like a Squirrel"

- Discovery News, 19 October 2012

Those who went down in
The cave of Lascaux
Found a handprint below
A red huge bison
Conforming to the
Wall, but they never
Told us about their
Deeper descent.

Ssshhhhh....

The weeping crags bent
Inward, forcing those
Intruders deeper
Into lightlessness,
Down ladders of rock,
Below every sound,
Into a zone of

The mute, the deaf, and
The dead. They stopped. They
Waited for their eyes
And ears to adjust,
For the ghosts of the
Ancestors to wake
Up. Then water whistled
Over the stones. A
Giant breath was panting....

Ssshhhhh....

Someone--an atheist
Or a Frenchman--
Scratched a match across
His boot. The flame leaped,
And the rocks did too,
And on them in black
Danced squirrels. They
Were tormenting a
Prehistoric cat.
Flames tipped their torches
And burned in their

Ebony eyes. Squirrels
That knew fire and pain!
Their cave-historian
Was proud: below her
Work, she planted a
Blackpaint foot, and her
Long middle claw
Pointed at the dying
Animal -- a
Boast, or a warning.
Around the killing
Place, charcoal leaves had
Settled in mounds, like
Souls of the departed.

A Cricket and an Owl

oh i wuz crickits an sawd my fiddul,
fiddlee dee fiddlee aye, hay diddl diddl oh.

i wuz crickits an sawd my fiddul owl
the luvlorn day, oh. i wuz crickits an

sawd my fiddul, i jigged an sawd an sawd
an jigged owl the luvlorn day, oh. ow comes

i did i'm sure i can not say, oh, i'm
sure i cannot say. i jiggd when i sawd,

& hoppd when i jiggd, jiggd an sawd an hoppd, oh.

§

I wuz an owl that swallowed iz fiddul,
I swallowed it straight down, oh. Fiddul an

Crickit I swallowed them down, I swallowed

Them all down, oh. Ow comes I did it, ow
Come theys gone, I knows the reezin why, oh.

I knows the reezin, I knows the reezin,
I knows the reezin why, oh.

Cubicle

I climbed up onto the chair
in my cubicle and peered
over the acoustically insulated
barrier between my cubicle and Ken's.
I had to be careful, because
the chair swivels. Then
I had to be careful some more,
because there was dog shit
on my shoes and I didn't want
it to stain the document on my desk,
an autograph manuscript of Michelangelo's
poem about his hearing.
Just above the comparison he makes
between tinnitus and the sound
of crickets is a doodle in his own hand
of a cloud or swarm or plague
of crickets or perhaps of locusts. Although
why Buonarotti might have sketched locusts
on a poem about crickets is
a matter of debate. I was invisible,
because I was inaudible.

Every time I do something like this, I hope
I'll catch Ken doing something
disreputable. But he's always doing the same
thing.

Mooning

The moon rising east
Of here peeps through the
Branches as we fall
Into our dreams. It
Doesn't see us; it
Doesn't know we spy
It; it doesn't know
We're dreaming. It shines
On the creek's water
And twigs gossiping
In winter's night airs;
On snow on blackened
Eaves; racoons peeking
From the sewer grates;
Mice sleeping in the
Grassy banks; cricket
Eggs, stuck to the brown
Leaves; it lights them all.

Olive

Dear Diary

dear diary, i met a fella last
nite, it was in a taxi & he was
driving, actually. i can't say how i
arrived at such a state, but (ssshhhh) i'll tell
you in a whisper that as i glided
(i like to think of it that way) among
the billows of my skirt into the back
of that man's cab (red leather!) i was sooo
tipsy. christmas eve and ten below, and
where did my white frock coat, the one with blue
spangles to match the glitter i glued to
my eyelids, go off to i wonder. it
wasn't with me in there is all i know.
cunning, too, it was, i hated to lose it.
i lose ever so many things in cabs
and ladies' rooms, i must have left half my
life behind, all those nites of mine on the
town. well, i don't get into town so much.
half my life (the other half), what am i
doing? you know, diary dear, and you
know i could use a break once a year or

so. imagine the nerve of that fella,
getting mad on account of a tiny
accident on his precious leather seat.
i guess he never spat up after some
festivities. i ask you, diary,
is that how a real seaman acts? some
seaman. "between voyages," says he. huh!
i bet! but after i ran into the
a & p and came out with the clorox
and soaked the mess up, i thought he was a
little nicer. asking me for my number
and all. and i might call him too, who knows?
not me! i'll have to think about some things
first. like the nickname, what's up with that? and
the trick pipe and the yucky laff! o well,
dear diary, he did look kinda stacked
in that stupid sailor suit. you never
know, i guess. your friend,

olive.

The Poet

dear diary, that fella with the taxi,
you know, that muscular person in the
sailor suit? i thot all week about him,
and then i pinched my cheek, and i called him.
some nerve, huh? we went for a spin to the
docks where his boat's tied up. wot a tub! crows
in the smoke stack and cows snoozing in a
stack of hay underneath the poop, and, i'm
not sure, but it looked like a crocodile's
tail wagging from a lifeboat, which they had
only two of to start with anyway.
not my cup of sugar tea, i tell you!
it was sweet nothings he whispered in my
ear that kept me planted there, not no
promise of a cruise to king kong's island,
or the muscles on his muscles he kept
calling "muskles" or all the dough which he
has none of, lord knows. lord kuh-nose, i should
say, or, rather, i shouldn't. but sweet lord
what nothings they was. nothing i'll ever
understand, i have to say. but when his
voice was rumbling, so dark, so close to me,

and his lips were touching me on my neck
and all, something went loose down there--you
know where. he said this, i remember, "i
yam a poet what knows his stuff," and "which
is more than that feller aristotle
says a feller like i yam do," and "them
greeks and theys categories, they's fulla
barnacles. pelasgian dories. scrape
and shellack theys greasy hulls, i says. says
who? says me!" and then that man kissed me!!! oh,
diary dear, he put his hand inside my
waistband then, and i let him, and then i
don't know what i let him do. his fingers
were so soft upon my skin i could not
stand it, he swirled them on the little hairs
and i let him, and then he was touching
me, where? you know. and i let him do that
too, and then i forgot everything but
the dark of night and the stars i seen and
yes i was telling him, yes, go on, yes.

your friend, olive.

Bluto's Lament

Aw, she was the cat's pajamas,
And she was mine. Why did I let
Her get away? Didn't I know?
Now she's gone, she's easier to see:
Everything a man could ask
For, dream of ... the apple of my
Desires, my old girl, my Olive;
The stem and leaf of beauty, she
Was, and I let her go; I let
Her go. No man sees his own heart,
That's the needle in it. His eye
Turns outward; it scries out sky, sea,
Clouds, bridges ... and misses the
Torrent turning in his blood, the
Thing that swims within him, and is
What he swims in.

Eye, Gauguin

Breasts with Red Flowers No. 1

Ugh, analysis.
Trick of the drawing room:
Her eyes hook
As they pretend to look
Into you.
Search her gaze.
Most modest of that thug's madonnas---
Wearing Europe's face,
A jeune fille, really---
She's nude for you,
Selling everything,
It's delicious---
Breasts, love,
Mangos,
Grace...
Glancing at something, Something,
Aside.
Not you.
I can't conceal
She whispered in my dream,
What a fine, nasty
Animal

I am.

Varnish can.

Breasts with Red Flowers No. 2

Gauguin to Willumsen:

*I have decided to travel soon to Tahiti.... A terrible
epoch is coming for future generations in Europe, the
tyranny of gold. Everything is rotten....*

I'll admit

You were right

About the gold.

Apples, francs,

The luster of her bosoms...

All tyranny.

So?

You were wild for it,

The letch frothed---

Creamier on your

Mediterranean lips

Than any throat

You ever painted.

You should have been my star, Gauguin.

Oriental. Blue and cool

And always rising.

I crave all you had,
All you were.
Not dreams.
I try to wake.
Yes.
My green soul screams
Red dogs,
Banana skies.

Breasts with Red Flowers No. 3

Your eyes do it.
They make those mangos ironic.
It's always like that,
On paper, canvas,
On vases in museums of glory,
In the minds of all the fantasists tortured
With what never was or will be
Possible.
Your anima,
Paralyzed in oil,
Burns always,
Always, for the fruit,
While you ignore
Or miss
Or mock
The blossoms.
Petals that never shall
Rain impassioned
To your hair.
You and your kind,
Lady,
Tantalize the living

And the dead.
It looks so simple.

Breasts with Red Flowers No. 4

What, no legs?
That monomaniac left you nothing
To stand on.
He said:
Swim into my world,
Little faith-deluded sparkles.
Here,
Fovea's hotspot,
Is what is real,
Marvel.
Blind am I,
He chanted,
To all but love---
So spread
Your seaborne, seabreathing
Waterwings,
My dear,
Precious,
Onlyest,
Most savage throb,
Come here.
These lights are legend---

*They cripple
What they cannot see.*

The Vision After the Sermon

Good women of Brittany, listen.
You know who I am---
A sturdy, vicious, amiable brute---
And I know what you think of me.

Ladies, careful. Judge not.
The grass grows crimson
At the spectacle of your passion.
Power shimmers in the light.

See: these common places
Are always more than natural.
In the wake of their becoming,
Such things as steeples disappear.

My churlish will erases them,
And brooms, cobblestones,
Crooked trees---every child
Of your imaginations.

When the field is free
Of inessentials,

What is real finds space.

Too abstract? Pardon.

Then example: Jacob at Beth-El.

Remember? He slept in waste places.

The world was vacant.

God, abhorring a vacuum, sent angels.

There's something in this for us moderns.

What? Innocence, before history.

Glory. As sight is my vocation,

I dared to look. It crippled me.

Some wounds are simple; not this.

I climbed to heaven on phantom limbs.

The unforgiving Son of Man

Doffed His mask. I paid for the favor.

Biscuits and water; pillows of rock.

Seven years and seven, hard labor.

Sons, wives, syphilis.

Echoing radiance of the stars.

Why? Price of admission.

White bonnets, green fields,

French virtues---lost, all that peace,

To me, in meeting His eyes,

The kind twin poles of the universe.

Woman with a Mango

Always, Gauguin, when you part your lips,
One symbol like a light-filled dove
Flutters from your universe to ours.
A girl, she offers something: life,
A fruit, the sight of her parts for love.
She averts her eyes. I search the canvas
As a seer scans the Tarot pack,
Eager for visions, reluctant to find them.

In your empire, the air is orange
With syphilitic fervor.
Blood colonizes the eye,
Disguising weeds as teardrops,
Blossoms as propellers,
Mangos as fat persimmons.
Here, hell has swallowed paradise.
Your soul is rotten with desire.

I do believe that it's a pose,
This pique, this cynicism and rue...
All bluster. You oil your skin with lies.
You choke in European clothes

Like the model for *Vahine no te Vi*
And shrink, as she did, from the lemon light
Carving a moon on her cheek, firing
The gasoline you glossed her lips with.

Elevator

In the Elevator at Bamberger's

Man followed me into the elevator
At Bamberger's on his knees. Such an awkward
Way to walk. The way he thrust his hips, first this
Way, then that, grunting and huffing in his
Hurry to get in before the steel doors cut
Him in two or closed him out was something
Bizarre to see. He was very nicely dressed, though:
A beautiful wool overcoat (how I envied
Him those sheep) and the nattiest felt sombrero
You ever saw. I can't tell you about his
Shoes, though; I don't think he wore any. Now that
I think about it, I doubt he had feet, or
Legs below the thighbone either, even. It's
Why he waddled that way, I suppose. Some of
These details are hard to bring back. Some things
About him tend to disappear. Things I recall
Trail away when I inspect them, as though they
Were wary of my grasp. Makes me stamp my foot
Sometimes! His eyes, they evanesce. Wait a
Minute, though. I see them. Between some boy's legs
Sheathed in poplin and a matron's fat cheery

Ass they peer at me. An eager, sly, insistent
Glance. What's he want? *Don't look at me that way*, I
Tell him (in my mind.) *I see you*. Those eyes of
His give off a light that refrigerates my
Heart. The doors slide shut. A fellow in a
Uniform manhandles the chrome lever. Didn't
Know emporia like this still used men like
That in these so-handsomely appointed lifts.
(The flocked felt on the cage's brazen bars is
Cunning.) Our commander or whoever is
Handsome, too, in epaulets on shoulder cards
That bring out nicely the prominence of his
Cheekbones and rhyme, colorwise, with the lush mop
Of hair swept back above his brow, which is the
Gray shade of death for some reason. I nestle
Close to him for comfort from the gaze of the
Other one, the one who has no feet. Up we
Go! Or down. Or both, I don't remember.

She Hurt My Feelings

This woman is too fetching to
Be unreal, even though I know
I am dreaming her by
The pricking of my toes, by
How she shrugs and rolls her
Eyes and twitches a little and
Sighs with an ontological
Discontent, wishing I
Were not here or anywhere
Else, for that matter. If
She looks away, I'll wake
Up, and that won't be any
Good. *Disappointment*
Won't be the word for it,
Even if that's the only one
I have to use on nights I sue for
Love in ice and smoke before
I am annihilated. How
Mild my protest is. When
Rumpelstilzkin lost his
Daughter and--let's stick
With mild diction--divided

Himself by seizing the parts
That pricked and heaving
Hard, very hard, very, very, very
Hard, I don't think it was the
Child he pined for, do you?
More like me he was.

The Elevator Operator Speaks

An ang-
el with
good tools
can do
any
thing! I'll
tell you
(strictly
entre
nous) the
movies
and the
poems
get it
wrong. I
bear no
will, ill
or an-
y oth-
er kind,
any
more than

a *cap-*
o's clean-
er, cinch-
ing strings
of wire
pinched from
a
pian-
o ac-
ross the
throat of
a dis-
missed sold-
ier crap-
ping his
pants with
lust for
one more
breath, just
one, just
one more
please, one
more and
more and

more please,
does. Aaah,
mercy,
which
isn't
in me
either:
one day
it's wire.
Anoth-
er, it's
an el-
evat-
or.

Mommy

Gesso

In the beginning was my mommy.
She gave me a dolly; she gave me
Tooth memories.
Rictus spanned mad death's head.
Crouching, drooling, over what?
The object of her pique
Was on the floor somewhere,
Uninstantiated. But she,
With that gift of hers,
Could see what was so
Irritating. She turned to grin
Disconcertingly, unmaning me,
As I came down the stairs
In my pajamas. I was nine, or seven,
Maybe, or five, but I knew to
Marvel at the mottled skin,
The gloss-black hair and eloquence:
Affairs of sin. Her eyes whirled wild
Like horses' eyes and corkscrewed tongues
In the *Guernica* of Picasso.

The colors were amazing. The truth,
Grey paint, so long later,
Was amazing too.
She gave me a maze, I guess.
Joyous. Made
By one who was dead.

Seaman

Scissors cut paper.
The bunk bed's shaking.
Gesso. Semen paste.
Masturbation lessons
Mommies aren't supposed to give, are
They? You did.
Clumped up wads,
Disgusting, yes,
But I didn't guess
How much, I guess.

Going, not coming!
Clytemnestra's confused.
The bunk bed's shaking.
Scissors slice mattress.
Ridiculous, I
Dodge whirling blades, kissed
Away to meet the world,
Penned by cheap pasteboard walls.
It's Queens, after all.
Kill me, mommy.
Victory is mind. You missed.

Radio

Where do we come from?

Well, from water? Dust?

Fools from folly. One

Cannot answer prayers

Addressed to God knows what.

Fool me not. A sprite

Of dust or fluff or dander

Waved hi or bye-bye

From a tusk of goo --

Some impasto on

The *D'ou venons-nous*.

You lunged at the wall,

Impatient lover,

To enter that world -- to

Intussuscept the in-

Violate. Art's housefraü. Gag

Me with a plunger. I

Crap two turds

For suffering humanity --

Ants on parade

In a dead cat's snarl,

Clots in the ear

Of a rotting squirrel --

That and that ilk

Gall me. That's me. But,

Wild, you vomited --

Some girls of innocent knee

Got immolated in a Catholic

School, Philadelphia, 1960 --

On your knees, by the radio.

Hee hee, ho ho. You

Also grieved for Cheerios.

Dead lady, snoring,

Looks like,

In the next bed.

Urine. Iron doors, locked.

I knocked and knocked

Until they let us

In. We hopped across

Ammonious puddles.

Hansel and Hansel,

Me and Mike,

Came to see what

You might like. A cup
Of bitters. A bit of tea.
Sugar, pepper, nice
Quick knife. Kill me
Mommy, kill me soon, kill
Me with this little spoon.
Push it down my chickee
Throat, choke me with
A pound of spice. Do it,
Do it, do it soon, take
Me to your bedlam room.
I want it want it want to go
Want to stay, don't make
Me go. Let me stay, don't
Make me go, let me
Be your radio.
Let me be here, let me stay,
Don't make me, make me,
Make me go. Let me
Be your radio.

The Mask

Some memories are
Inassimilable,

Knots not to be un-
Tied. Time tenses the rope,

Merely. You lied a-
Bout so much and left

Me here to ponder
What I cannot touch.

Some lies are memorable,
Tickling, whispering

What straight ways will not
Seek. Mommy. You came

Home, white gauze in

Your nose, your ear. Knots
Of snot in ropes of

Gore spilled on ice. Was-
N't you, was it? Me?

Some other boy? Who?
I liked toys; all boys

Do. A bus. School kids
Rushed the door. My dog,

The eyes of which
Terri whipped with her

Little wooden twig.
No music here. Christ-

Mas logic. My one-
Way iridescent

Moon mask came by mail.
Magic tinsel, sil-

Ver cars. Back-door pee-
Jays, built-in feet.

Walkie-talkie cords,
Snapped in two on the

Bathroom floor. Tiled. Check-
Ered. No more.

The Ibis

I search my hard heart,
Mommy, the desert

In your breast. You can
Go now, go. Ibis

Gaggles skein across
The moon. Shadow wings

Swing time along the
River. Soon, you will

Die. Bye-bye! Bye-bye.

About the author

Barry Blumenfeld is a pen name of Barry Brent. He comes from New York City, where he was born in 1947. When he was still working for a living, he had all kinds of jobs, such as courier, factory worker, salesman, and teacher. He studied in (but didn't graduate from) the M.F.A. program of the University of Arizona and barely managed to finish a Ph.D. in mathematics from Boston University -- much good it did him! He has a novel, *O, Sinners*, which is currently (2013) available on Amazon. Barry lives in Minnesota with his wife, Audrey Peham.

Barry would like to publish his books with a commercial or an independent press. His email address is *barry314159@gmail.com*.

118

119

Proof

Printed By Createspace



Digital Proofer